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Bush of the CIA Softens an Image

You'd have thought Frank Sinatra had enough to do, perhaps, singing, insulting people. But he seeks more. He covets a second career as a spy.

He took up his yearning to moonlight in a trench coat with the CIA director himself at a February meeting in New York, according to a story in the Boston Globe. George Bush, making a nervous appearance before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, had no comment on the story, which sounded like a confirmation.

The source of the story is the director's brother Jonathan, who confided that the testy warbler dropped a number of big names at the seance and repeatedly offered his services to his country.

HE MIGHT OR might nor have met Sinatra, Bush said with anxiety written on his well bred face.

During the question period, a Globe editor asked if the company often books entertainers for its activities.

"I'm not going to comment on it," Bush replied stiffly. "I would say that any American who wants to support the CIA, he or she would be welcome."

Sinatra, of course, had already had a speaking acquaintance with the agency. He was a pal of those two patriotic mobsters, Sam Giancana and Johnny Roselli, who were recruited by the CIA in the early sixties to poison Castro with a cigar or a pen or a pill or something.

Bush's "no comment" about Sinatra turned out to be the most interesting thing he had to say. He seemed to want to convince the editors that the "rogue elephant" is now being run by a nice guy. He flung out a handful of initials to prove that a new spirit of reform and openness is sweeping through Langlev.

There is, he said, his pale blue eyes blinking in the bright television lights, something called the CFI, if that makes you feel better. It's the Committee on Foreign Intelligence, but he doesn't say what it does. He only promised that it is "the machinery to control resources" — whatever that means.

HE ALSO GAVE the comforting news that the Forty Committee, which brought you the Chilean destabilization, the support of the Greek colonels and other proud moments in American foreign policy, is now known as the OAG, or the Office of the Advisory Group.

Didn't he have more important things to do, the Globe editor wanted to know, than to sit around with Frank Sinatra?

Actually, Bush's most important job is to see that the agency does not cause the President any election-year embarrassment. The CIA had weathered the storm of the congressional probes, and the President has insured that it will go on as before, only with greater secrecy, under the benign eye of a supervisory board heavy with the king of cold warriors who got it into trouble in the first place.

Congress was routed in the fight with the spooks. The agency was lucky in the chairmen of the two investigating committees: Frank Church of the Senate had one eye on running for the president. Otis Pike of the House never looked behind him; that is to say, when he took on the President or the secretary of state and demanded this or threatened that, he failed to notice that he did not have his members with him.

The Senate report is expected next week. What the House investigation principally spawned was another investigation by the House of itself. Maddened by leaks from the committee, the House refused to look at the budget figures of the agency and instead voted \$150,000 to find out who leaked the committee's report to Daniel Schorr of CBS, who leaked it to the Village Voice.

The country doesn't care. No candidate mentions the CIA unless asked about it, even Church, who is now campaigning full-steam.

THE ONLY PERSON caught up in any proceedings relating to years of abuses, excesses, illegalities and perjuries is Schorr, who has been suspended from his CBS job while the House assembles detectives to track down the person who gave him a document, which the House of Representatives declined to print or read even after it had been published.

It says something about the editors that while they asked Bush about Frank Sinatra, they did not ask him about Schorr. The unity and loyalty of the press to one of its own in trouble over a freedom of the press issue can best be measured by the fact that when Schorr belatedly identified himself as the source of the Village Voice report, a number of CBS affiliates petitioned CBS to fire him.

The CIA has nothing to fear from George Bush obviously, or from Congress, either. All Bush has to worry about is explaining his secret meeting with Sinatra, who is a vocal reminder of "the bad stuff" that Bush says isn't happening at the agency any more.